

*Costa: My message from this April still stands. If Miller thinks he can destroy the entire Valley way of life to suit his own ends, he'll get the fight of a lifetime.*

**Washington, D.C.** – In April, Congressman Jim Costa took on Bay Area Democratic Congressman George Miller (D-Richmond) following his promise to push for tougher restrictions on water deliveries to farms and cities in the San Joaquin Valley (link [here](#) ). Costa said at the time that if Miller wants a war over water allocations, then Costa and California's 20th Congressional District would give him one (link [here](#) ).

Costa and the Valley responded by fighting to increase federal water allocations to communities south of the Delta. But the war over Valley water is still on. Most recently, Miller and a group of outside politicians sent a letter to Jean Sagouspe, President of Westlands Water District in West Fresno, harassing the water district over how they use their water. The letter specifically addresses Westlands' water supply and a water exchange taking place with Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

Today, Costa responded to Miller and the other lawmakers in a letter and issued the following statement:

"Miller and his allies are dead wrong to create the impression that extra water was delivered to Westlands in 2010. No region's water supply in California has been more impacted by the water crisis than here in the San Joaquin Valley. That is a fact.

"Thanks to our efforts, we secured a lot more water this year than what the federal government originally intended to give us. While we still need more, we handed Miller a defeat and he just can't stand to see more water flowing to the Valley. Now he is harassing one of our water districts because he doesn't like their attempts to maximize what water they have.

"Water exchanges are an important part of planning for coming water years and delivering water to communities in times of need. They are also an important tool for Valley communities to use

in the face of the flawed federal water regulations that we are fighting and Miller supports.

“My position has not changed one bit. If Miller and his allies think they can get away with attacking Valley farmers and farmworkers whose livelihoods depend on water, he is wrong.

“If he wants to pick a fight with an entire Valley population whose economy hinges on a fair share of water, we’ll give him one.

“We won a partial victory this year and Congressman Miller clearly doesn’t like it. His letter to Westlands is another reminder of how serious and long-term this battle is and how hard we have to keep working.

“But my message from this April still stands. If Miller thinks he can destroy the entire Valley way of life to suit his own ends, he’ll get the fight of a lifetime.”

Text of Rep. Costa’s letter is copied below.

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October 1, 2010

The Honorable Grace Napolitano

The Honorable John Garamendi

1610 Longworth House Office Building

2459 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Thompson

The Honorable George Miller

231 Cannon Office Building

2205 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Colleagues:

This letter is in response to your recent correspondence with my constituent, Jean Sagouspe of Westlands Water District (Westlands), requesting information regarding the agency's water supply. While I am certain that Mr. Sagouspe will appreciate the opportunity to address the specific questions in your letter in detail, I would be remiss in my role as a representative of the San Joaquin Valley if I did not share my own thoughts with you on this critical issue.

You are wrong to create the impression that extra water was delivered to Westlands in 2010. The reality is that in recent years insufficient water has been provided to one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world due to the regulatory imposed drought and below average rainfall. No region's water supply in California has been more impacted by the water crisis than here in the San Joaquin Valley. This is a fact.

Water is the lifeblood of the Valley. Without an adequate water supply, farmers, farm workers, and entire communities across my District have endured significant hardships trying to sustain jobs and provide for their families. While we have worked to increase our share of water flowing to the region this past year, the devastating impact on the Valley's economy and quality of life due to a lack of water is real and still persists. More work must be done and California must get serious and work together to provide meaningful solutions to our water supply challenges.

Your letter makes reference to an innovative water exchange that I and other members of the Valley delegation helped to facilitate between Metropolitan Water District (Metropolitan) and Westlands. Above all else, the work of these two agencies to find creative solutions to ongoing problems that have been made worse by federal regulatory requirements is something that should be commended. The exchange will benefit cities and farms alike by making water available to 25 million people in Southern California where it is needed and also return those supplies back to the San Joaquin Valley at a time when they are needed.

Even with these noteworthy efforts, the underlying problem remains: federal regulatory restrictions have crippled the operational flexibility of California's water system. This lack of flexibility has placed a greater value on water storage, which is what a water exchange between two water agencies is all about – finding a place to store water until it is needed. The exchange between Metropolitan and Westlands is effective because it produces dual benefits, first for Southern California and then for the San Joaquin Valley. However, interim solutions like these may not always be available to us.

As you know, I have been pushing the Administration and working with the federal, state, and local water agencies to revise and change the regulations that have negatively impacted the Valley, and will continue to do so. But, if we intend to work towards solving California's water problems in future water years, we will need to work together to find more flexibility and storage

throughout the system and need your support.

Now more than ever, California's water crisis has placed a premium on everyone working together rather than splitting into factions for those below the Delta and those above it. Each of us relies on the Delta as the lynchpin of our plumbing system and each of us has a part to play in the solution. To illustrate that point, Congresswoman Napolitano, your constituents are totally dependent upon both the quality and quantity of water that we are able to deliver through the Delta. Congressman Miller, your constituents are at risk from the pathogens that the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District is releasing into the Delta. Congressman Garamendi, your constituents are counting on the repairs to the Delta that only the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) can deliver. And, Congressman Thompson, your constituents and the rest of Northern California would face massive cutbacks in water used above the Delta that some environmentalists are now calling for in the wake of the State Water Resources Control Board's draft flow criteria report.

It is high time that we put regional politics of the past aside and address our state's long-term water needs. Every region of California deserves a water supply they can count on, and if we cannot start from there, we are doomed to failure. Our water system is clearly broken; and arguing over who broke it rather than working on solutions such as BDCP and the coequal goals of the Delta Vision is not beneficial to any of the constituencies we serve.

Sincerely,

JIM COSTA

Member of Congress